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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**J.H. BAXTER & COMPANY AGREES TO
TEST NEARBY DRINKING-WATER WELLS**

Company believes its operations pose no threat to neighboring drinking-water supplies

ARLINGTON, WA, April 23 -- In an agreement with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), J.H. Baxter & Company will test drinking-water wells near its wood-treating facility in Arlington. The company has also agreed to investigate clean-up alternatives at its site, and will take measures to manage stormwater at the 51-acre facility.

Baxter's agreement with the EPA is in addition to extensive data from its own testing and investigation program, initiated in 1988. These data lead the company and its environmental consultants, Hart Crowser, to believe that Baxter's operations pose no threat to drinking water supplies in the Arlington area, including the city of Arlington's well. Baxter's ongoing monitoring processes, conducted by Hart Crowser, began with the installation of four monitoring wells and today include 11 monitoring wells, quarterly groundwater testing, plus sampling of the facility's soil.

Prior to the EPA's involvement at the site, Baxter has been working with Washington state's Department of Ecology on issues of groundwater and soil quality. Baxter believes its operations comply with state and federal regulations. Commenting on the agreement with the EPA, Georgia Baxter, the company's executive vice president and environmental manager, said, "We look forward to working with the EPA to demonstrate that our operations meet current safety and environmental standards, and to assuring that Baxter doesn't pose a threat to anyone's drinking water."

The primary material Baxter uses that is of concern to the EPA and the state is pentachlorophenol (PCP), the dominant wood preservative for the treatment of utility poles. PCP has been detected in soil samples at Baxter's site, and in a few of the company's monitoring wells. Another wood-preservative substance, creosote, was last used at the site in 1990. Baxter's monitoring data indicate that no creosote has been released at the facility.

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Hart Crowser believes the sampling information shows that contaminated groundwater has probably moved off-site in a northwesterly direction, although the extent appears to be limited -- samples from a monitoring well beyond the property boundary, in the direction of groundwater flow, have showed no contamination. There are no drinking-water wells within 4000 feet of Baxter's site in the direction of groundwater flow.

Baxter experienced three PCP overflows from its treatment tanks, in 1981 (1400 gallons), 1989 (200 gallons) and 1990 (2000 gallons). Complete cleanup procedures followed each overflow. Evidence indicates there was contamination of the property by previous owners, prior to Baxter's purchase of the site in 1970.

Baxter has made significant upgrades to its facility since 1990, including expanded secondary containment around the treatment tanks. Other improvements and preventive measures include a new tank farm, roofs over the tank farm and drip pad, recycling and secondary containment for all process solution, and granulated activated carbon treatment for all process water.

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